

Testimony of Fredrica D. Kramer, 387 O Street, SW
Public Hearing on the DC Comprehensive Plan Framework Elements—Draft Amendments
Committee of the Whole
March 20, 2018

Good afternoon, Chairman Mendelson and fellow Councilmembers. My name is Fredrica Kramer. I am Vice Chair of the Near SE/SW Community Benefits Coordinating Council (CBCC), whose mission is to help procure community benefits to maintain social diversity—which the Southwest Small Area Plan attests is unique and highly valued by our community—and to maintain Southwest’s special physical character—open space, iconic mid-century architecture, and important historical remainders of “Old Southwest.” Both can easily be compromised by redevelopment.

I speak for myself as a scholar of urban and social policy, but reflect the work of CBCC and our direct experiences with SW/SE redevelopment, the largest such effort in the City.

I have two overall comments. First, ANC 6D, as with other ANC’s, has not reviewed these amendments according to their Charter responsibilities before being considered by the full Council. One of the Framework’s Guiding Principles for creating successful neighborhoods is meaningful citizen participation—moving these amendments through the Council before ANC review, which itself would have generated community input, limits the Plan’s ability to reflect the effects of development at the micro, neighborhood level, and contradicts that principle.

Second, the Framework should not be adopted separate from a full set of amendments to the detailed Elements, and fully vetted by the community. The Framework offers some good principles for creating “a *more* [my emphasis] inclusive and resilient city.” Without reviewing in detail the prospectus for individual neighborhoods, that broad goal can remain elusive.

Some examples from Southwest even with a better Small Area Plan is informative.

- Increasing height and density of most new structures is moving much of the open and common areas to interior spaces, to be enjoyed by new tenants but not the broader community.
- As height and density increase, below market rate units are becoming a decreasing percentage of the whole of neighborhood housing, reducing diversity overall.
- Redevelopment pushes up rent for both residential and commercial spaces—we are struggling to get truly neighborhood-serving amenities, crucial to maintaining the economic diversity the Framework aims for, or our Small Area Plans’ promise of a neighborhood “Main Street” on Fourth.
- The Council’s commitment to Build First for Greenleaf redevelopment is yet to be realized. Nothing protects our other exemplary public housing to avoid displacement of low income residents.

- Other than the 51% local hiring requirement, we have not tied education, training, or pre-apprenticeship funding to redevelopment for those who need more help to get jobs in the new inclusive city.
- The Buzzard Point Vision Framework, also just a “framework,” has yet to address the many concerns raised by the ANC and Southwest community; the main spine to the new development cuts right through James Creek, potentially threatening that community.

This Framework is so vague—replacing definitions with descriptions; removing actual physical descriptions with “context” (which context? future context?), potentially diluting protections of existing neighborhoods; making descriptive areas in the Generalized Policy and Future Land Use Maps only “soft edged” guidelines, not intended to be strictly followed—it is not clear what zoning decisions might be justified on the basis of non-prescriptions. Nor are there any standards, targets or baselines to assess before and after effects, ensuring that land use decisions affecting housing and other amenities not result in a less inclusive and resilient city.

The Framework is not ready for Council adoption.